

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to FIG. 13, as well as to FIGS. 9A, 9B, 9C, 9D, 10A, 10B, 11A, 11B, 11C, 11D, 12A, 12B, 12C, 12D, 12E and 12F.

These sheets, which include only FIG. 13 (one sheet); FIGS. 9A, 9B, 9C and 9D (one sheet); 10A and 10B (one sheet); 11A, 11B, 11C and 11D (one sheet); 12A, 12B, 12C, 12D, 12E and 12F (one sheet), replace the original sheets including these figures.

Attachment: Five (5) Replacement Sheets

REMARKS

This communication is responsive to the Office Action mailed March 1, 2005. As discussed in detail below, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's objections and rejections have been adequately rebutted or addressed.

Objections to the Drawings

FIG. 13 has been amended to include a designation that the subject matter illustrated therein is prior art. FIGS. 9A, 9B, 9C and 9D; 10A and 10B; 11A, 11B, 11C and 11D; 12A, 12B, 12C, 12D, 12E and 12F have been annotated with example numbers.

The Examiner contends that the feature of "the at least one central projection projects outward from the first abutting plane of the base portion with a height dimension smaller than that of the pair of peripheral projections" is not shown in the drawings. This feature has been amended in claim 1 as follows:

wherein the at least one central projection and the pair of peripheral projections -project outward from the first abutting plane of the base portion ~~with a height dimension smaller than that of the pair of peripheral projections~~ with a substantially same height

As is discussed in greater detail below (with reference to the rejection under 35 USC § 112, ¶1 rejection, it is respectfully submitted that this feature is shown at least in Fig. 12A.

Objections to the Specification

Regarding the examiner's objection to the numeral in page 2, line 27, the sub-frame is indicated by "229" (not 227) on FIG. 13 and, therefore, it is submitted no amendment is needed to this portion.

However, amendments have been made to TABLE 1 according to the examiner's suggestion. Specifically, with regard to TABLE 1, the numerical values for the present invention and comparative example 4 and 5 are corrected according to FIGS. 12A, 12C and 12E. The symbols "○" and "×" in row "Durability" are replaced by "sufficient" and "insufficient", respectively according to the description in paragraph [0064]. Similarly, the symbols "○", "×" and the triangle in row "Feeling Test" represent "GOOD FEELING" "BAD FEELING" and "IN BETWEEN FEELING."

In addition, the specification is amended at paragraph [0051] to coincide with the drawing dimensions (see FIG. 12A). Namely, in line 22, page 17 of the specification, "smaller than" should read --same as--.

Claim Amendments

Claim 1 is amended with regard to the final "wherein" clause, and it is respectfully submitted that, as amended, claim 1 is in compliance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 1.

Additionally, claim 1 is amended to incorporate the further feature that at least one central projection and the pair of peripheral projections projects outward from the first abutting plane of the base portion with a substantially same height. A basis for this amendment may be found on FIG. 12A of the present application, for example, and no new matter is added by this amendment.

Finally, claims 1, 7 and 8 are amended to address minor informalities, as suggested by the examiner and as otherwise discovered.

Obviousness Rejection

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-8 under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Tanahashi et al. (EP 0780592 A2) in view of Leibach. This rejection as applied to the amended claim 1 and claims depending therefrom, should be traversed for the following reasons:

We first point out some specific features recited in the claims:

(a) a rubber stopper has a base portion of tubular shape in cross section and being secured by press-fit onto the rigid abutting member without adhesive to a superficial surface of the rigid abutting member;

(b) a pair of peripheral projections situated above laterally opposite corners of a corresponding first abutting plane of the rigid abutting member have a width dimension extending inside and outside the corners of the rigid abutting member; and

(c) at least one central projection formed on an intermediate area interposed between the pair of peripheral projections.

The feature (b), for example, in combination with the features recited in claim 1, operates to prevent an excess outward displacement or elastic deformation of the rubber stopper along a superficial profile of the rigid abutting member, when the first abutting plane of the rubber stopper is brought into abutting contact with the abutting surface provided on a member connected to the other one of the two mounting member. Accordingly, the rubber stopper is deemed to be less likely to suffer from a local stress-concentration, which would result in cracking or other defects due to the stress concentration. By preventing (or, at least, severely minimizing) outward displacement of the rubber stopper, it is also possible for the rubber stopper to exhibit soft spring characteristics upon abutment thereof. (See, for example, paragraph [0018] of Applicant's specification.)

Further, the feature (c), namely, the at least one central projection formed on the intermediate area interposed between the pair of peripheral projections exhibits hard spring characteristics, making it possible to provide a non-linear spring characteristics of the stopper structure. See paragraphs [0019]-[0021] of Applicant's specification.

The secondary reference to Leibach is not relied on as disclosing or suggesting the feature (a) recited in claim 1. Furthermore, Leibach discloses that the rubber stopper 6 is

fastened on the core 2 by vulcanization (see column 5, lines 20-40). Accordingly, the Leibach reference does not disclose or suggest the features (b) and (c).

In addition, the primary reference to Tanahashi fails to disclose or suggest at least the feature (b). Namely, in Tanahashi, all the projections are situated inside the corners of the rigid abutting member, as clearly shown in FIGS. 5 and 6 (see Applicant's marked up figures 5 and 6, attached herewith as Appendix A). Specifically, in Tanahashi, the pair of peripheral projections 61C situated above the laterally opposite corners of the first abutting plane of the rigid abutting member, does not have a width dimension extending inside and outside the corners of the rigid abutting member. The projections 61C never extend to the outside of the corners as is apparent from the attached mark up figures 5 and 6.

Therefore, even if the cited references are taken in combination, the combination does not yield the subject matter (including features (a), (b) and (c)) of claim 1. Furthermore, while not intending to limit the scope of the claims by this statement, we note that the combination does not address the conventional problem discussed in paragraph [0013] (relating to stress concentration) of the present specification.

For at least the above reasons, then, it is respectfully submitted that the combination of Tanahashi and Leibach, even if it would have been obvious to make the combination, does not yield the subject matter of the claims.

In addition, claims 2-8 depending from claim 1 and are therefore also allowable over the cited references for at least the reasons stated for claim 1.

CONCLUSION

Applicant believes that all pending claims are allowable and respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance for this application from the Examiner. Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the undersigned can be reached at the telephone number set out below.

Respectfully submitted,
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